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Senate moves to protect vitality of Michigan forests

LANSING – Efforts to protect Michigan forests for residents, tourists and job providers passed the Senate Thursday, announced Sen. Michelle McManus, a package sponsor.

“These bills ensure we are taking responsible care of the environment and protecting one of our greatest natural resources, our forests,” said McManus, R-Lake Leelanau.

The three-bill package is part of the Senate Republican’s JOBS Action Plan, aimed at creating new jobs, saving existing jobs and promoting a more competitive business climate in Michigan.

House Bill 5554 would provide important parameters to guide the future management of state forest lands by establishing a third-party certification. The certification should increase the social, economic and environmental value and marketability of the state’s forest resources.

Senate Bill 1023 would establish four forest pilot areas to determine the most efficient and effective methods of harvesting timber while protecting wildlife habitats.

SB 1024, sponsored by McManus, would revise the Forest Finance Advisory Authority. The bill expands the authority from five members to nine members, and names the state treasurer as chairman. SB 1024 also allows the Forest Development Fund to be utilized for the acquisition and maintenance of the forest certification.

The bills were introduced in response to testimony provided by Michigan residents during the Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism hearings held across the state last year.

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